

**STATE OF ILLINOIS  
ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION**

AMEREN TRANSMISSION COMPANY OF ILLINOIS	)	
	)	
Petition for a Certificate of Public Convenience and	)	
Necessity, pursuant to Section 8-406.1 of the Illinois	)	
Public Utilities Act, and an Order pursuant to Section 8-	)	Docket No. 12-0598
503 of the Public Utilities Act, to Construct, Operate and	)	
Maintain a New High Voltage Electric Service Line and	)	
Related Facilities in the Counties of Adams, Brown,	)	
Cass, Champaign, Christian, Clark, Coles, Edgar, Fulton,	)	
Macon, Montgomery, Morgan, Moultrie, Pike,	)	
Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott and Shelby, Illinois.	)	

**TESTIMONY OF MIKE POPHAM ON BEHALF OF THE COLES COUNTY  
LANDOWNERS**

**Direct Testimony of Mike Popham**

**On Behalf of**

**Coles County Landowners**

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3 **I. INTRODUCTION**

4 **Q. Please state your name and address.**

5 **A.** Mike Popham. My address is 10746 NCR 1850 E, Charleston, Illinois, 61920.

6 **Q. On whose behalf are you testifying in this proceeding?**

7 **A.** I am testifying on behalf of the Coles County Landowners and Popham Bros. FLP and  
8 Popham Farms FLP.

9 **II. PURPOSE OF TESTIMONY**

10 **Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

11 **A.** The purpose of my testimony is to set forth detailed reasons as to why I oppose the  
12 construction of ATXI's proposed 345kV transmission line known as the Primary Route  
13 and to provide reasons as to why I support the alternative route in Coles County.

14 **Q. Have you previously testified before the Illinois Commerce Commission?**

15 **A.** No

16 **III. BUSINESS OPERATIONS**

17 **Q. Please tell us what Popham Bros. FLP and Popham Farms FLP is.**

18 **A.** These are two farming operations that have been built by the hard work of several  
19 generations of the Popham family. Our land consists of large sections of farm ground  
20 that lays primarily east and north-east of Charleston in Coles County with other tracts in

1 Coles and Douglas Counties. We have nine other farmers who farm property that we  
2 own and work directly with us.

3 **Q. Where is your home located?**

4 **A.** My brother, Ron Popham, and I both built new homes on the land and own a 20-acre lake  
5 that is located on the edge of the proposed 1100 North County Road Primary Route.

6 **Q. How would the Primary Route affect your farming operations?**

7 **A.** If the proposed line would go down the Primary Route, it would cross approximately two  
8 miles of our property. This would reduce the income that we would receive through  
9 renting this property drastically because of the inconvenience that would be produced  
10 from having to farm around the poles from the power lines. Various pieces of farm  
11 equipment are used in the farming operation and can be 120 feet wide. Farming around  
12 the poles would be very time consuming and inconvenient.

13 **Q. How would the Primary Route affect your property value?**

14 **A.** The value of the property would decrease because the lines would run across two large  
15 tracts. One tract is 640 acres, and the other 550 acres. These tracts are more valuable  
16 because there are no obstacles found in these fields. The location of the Primary Route  
17 on these tracts of land would lower the value of the property, as well as the value to our  
18 two homes. My brother's house is six months old and my house is eight years old. In  
19 addition, the primary line would be as close as 250 feet to some of the houses in the area,  
20 which would dramatically affect the property value. The construction and easement for  
21 the power line will clear-cut removing all trees and vegetation that separate my house  
22 from the neighbors, located on the other side of the proposed line. Moreover, the huge  
23 power line is a big eyesore that has possible health concerns.

1   **Q.   How else does the power lines affect your farming operations?**

2   **A.**   We use GPS for our farming and in all our equipment. The guidance systems in the  
3       equipment are controlled by satellite. The magnetic field that emulates from the power  
4       line interferes with the transmission of the radio frequencies and, in turn could interfere  
5       with our farming operations.

6   **Q.   Do you have any other concerns about the construction of the Primary Route?**

7   **A.**   1100 North County Road is the road that the Primary Route follows. This route goes  
8       directly through the middle of Charleston Stone Company's future mining area. The  
9       stone company is getting ready to dig up 80 feet of dirt and dynamite out limestone in an  
10      area of over 50 acres with a possible expansion of another 100 plus acres. This stone  
11      quarry consists of approximately 700 acres and has been in existence for nearly 60 years.  
12      I personally know the family that owns the quarry. I have been told that if Ameren  
13      follows the Primary Route, there are concerns that it would shorten the life span of the  
14      stone quarry from approximately 40-to-50 years to less than 10 years. This will greatly  
15      affect the employment in the Coles County area, as the quarry directly employs many  
16      local people. There are several concrete plants in the area, and most of the agricultural  
17      lime applied in our area comes from the quarry. All townships and government road  
18      projects and construction projects depend on the materials that are mined from this  
19      quarry.

20   **Q.   How close is the next quarry?**

21   **A.**   It is over 25 miles away. If the materials that Charleston Stone Company furnishes has to  
22      be transported to this area, it will put a huge strain on the roads and traffic. Many local

1 jobs will be lost and it will be a large expense on the local business to pay for the extra  
2 transportation and road repairs.

3 **IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**

4 **Q. Is there anything else significant in the area?**

5 **A.** Yes. There is an active bald eagle's nest that has two small eagles raised from this past  
6 spring. The eagles are constantly flying around the area, and the proposed Primary Route  
7 goes straight through the area where the nest is located. It is my understanding that  
8 certain rules and regulations must be followed when construction power lines near an  
9 active bald eagle's nest. I've seen a bald eagle sitting in the nest as recent as March 2013.

10 **V. PRE-EXISTING POWER LINES**

11 **Q. Do you have any prior experience with Ameren and its power lines?**

12 **A.** Yes. Ameren installed a 138,000 volt power line across our property in the late 1970's.  
13 Today, we are still having to deal with problems of the line. We were originally paid for  
14 damages to our property when the line was installed. However, these damages only  
15 cover the problems that show up for a short time after installation. When the 1970's line  
16 was installed, the ground was wet and all the equipment was drug around through our  
17 fields with bulldozers. The equipment left two-to-three-foot deep ruts and compaction  
18 and damage to the soil that has lasted for several years and can be easily seen by the yield  
19 reduction in crops. Our past experience with Ameren tells us that there is no way that  
20 they can compensate for future damages that will result from the installation of the new  
21 line.

22 **VI. CONCLUSION**

1   **Q.    What are you conclusions about the location of the location of the proposed location**  
2       **of the Primary Route?**

3   **A.**   The construction and installation of the power lines on the Primary Route would  
4       drastically affect our farming operations. This is our livelihood. In addition, the power  
5       lines would threaten the location and safety of the bald eagles that reside in close  
6       proximity to where ATXI's proposes to install the power line. Lastly, the impact that it  
7       would have on the quarry could be devastating to the community.

8   **Q.    Does this complete your testimony?**

9   **A.**   Yes.